

□ 1030

LOCAL SCHOOL CONTROL

(Mr. METCALF asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I once asked the Washington State superintendent of public instruction a question: What would happen in the classrooms of our State if we cut your budget 50 percent? His answer, most of what our office does is to counsel and help local school officials to cope with all the Federal rules and regulations.

This is a very good answer. The very best and most simple thing we could do to improve education is to eliminate Federal rules, regulations, and endless bureaucratic redtape and return control of local school districts and school power to school boards.

COMMUNISM AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

(Mr. EDWARDS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, there are few issues more important to the future of our Nation than public education. That is why I was amazed and deeply disappointed that yesterday a Republican House Member actually on the floor of this House compared America's public schools to the Communist legacy. To mention our public schools in the same breath with the idea of communism is extremism at its worst. It is the kind of extreme statement I am sure that would make Joseph McCarthy proud.

In my opinion, this Republican statement ranks right up there with the John Birch Society calling former President Eisenhower a Communist. I would suggest this is the type of extremist belief that has caused great problems for the modern day Republican Party.

I am proud that the Democratic Party, based on the values of Thomas Jefferson, not Carl Marx, believes public education is a vital American institution, not something related to the Communist legacy.

AIDS

(Mr. GANSKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GANSKE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to talk about something that will be voted on today. Despite some recent successes, AIDS continues to ravage our country. But even as public education campaigns have helped discourage some high-risk behaviors, needle sharing remains one of the most significant modes of HIV transmission.

Mr. Speaker, the battle against AIDS will continue to be uphill until we can reduce the transmission of HIV through shared needles. Numerous studies have shown that needle exchange programs hold promise as a means to slow the spread of AIDS.

AUGUST IN WASHINGTON

(Mr. GUTKNECHT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, President Clinton has just returned from a 3-week vacation on Martha's Vineyard. We all hope the President got some well-deserved rest, but in case he did not get a chance to pick up a paper or watch the news, here is some of what he missed during the last 3 weeks.

First of all, Paula Jones got her date in court. It was also revealed that Vice President GORE used his soft touch to raise some hard cash at the White House on the taxpayers' dime. It was also reported in the news that his former Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Espy, was indicted on 36 counts of garden variety corruption and unethical behavior. And finally, the Whitewater prosecutors obtained another guilty plea from a witness. Augusts are usually pretty dull months here in Washington, but not with this administration.

EDUCATION IS THE GREAT EQUALIZER IN AMERICA

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, there are certain ideas that are quintessentially American: Freedom of speech; freedom of religion; the notion that every American child, rich, poor, boy or girl, every American child is entitled to a public education. It is one of the things that makes this Nation great.

So, frankly, I have been dismayed and, quite frankly, disgusted by the assault on public education being waged by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, quite frankly, I could not believe my ears when I heard the gentleman from Colorado refer to public education as "a monopoly," "government-owned schools," and even making reference to public education and public schools in this country as part of a "communist legacy."

Mr. Speaker, they should be ashamed. Access to public education is one of the most precious and fundamental privileges of American life. It is irresponsible, it is simply wrong to imply that America's public schools are "Communist."

Mr. Speaker, I urge my Republican colleagues to stop their efforts to not only defund but, in fact, to degrade American public schools and American public education. It has been the great equalizer in this great Nation of ours.

IMPROVING EDUCATION SHOULD BE OUR TOP PRIORITY

(Mr. MCGOVERN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, as Members of Congress, we have no more sacred responsibility than to devote our full collective energy to improving education all across this Nation. For starters, we need to commit today to the highest possible academic standards for our children. Today students will be entering a highly competitive work force that will demand greater knowledge and skills. High educational standards are the key to preparing our children for the global economy of the 21st century.

Second, we need to begin rebuilding our crumbling schools. A recent GAO report has found that one-third of American schools need extensive repair. Our children deserve to attend class in an environment that is conducive to real learning. Finally, we, as a Congress, must commit to the cause of reducing overcrowding in schools.

A new Department of Education report found that 52 million children have enrolled in schools this fall, threatening to make the problem of overcrowding a national crisis. We should do all we can to help local school districts deal with this challenging issue. Democrats will continue to make education our top legislative priority.

I call on my Republican colleagues, I plead with them to stop the obstructionism, to join with us in our efforts. Let us put our kids first.